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ISSUE 242
SEPTEMBER 2011

common ground

9/11

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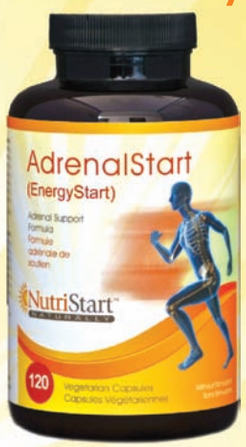

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Jack Layton's legacy of hope

A letter to all Canadians

August 20, 2011
Toronto, Ontario

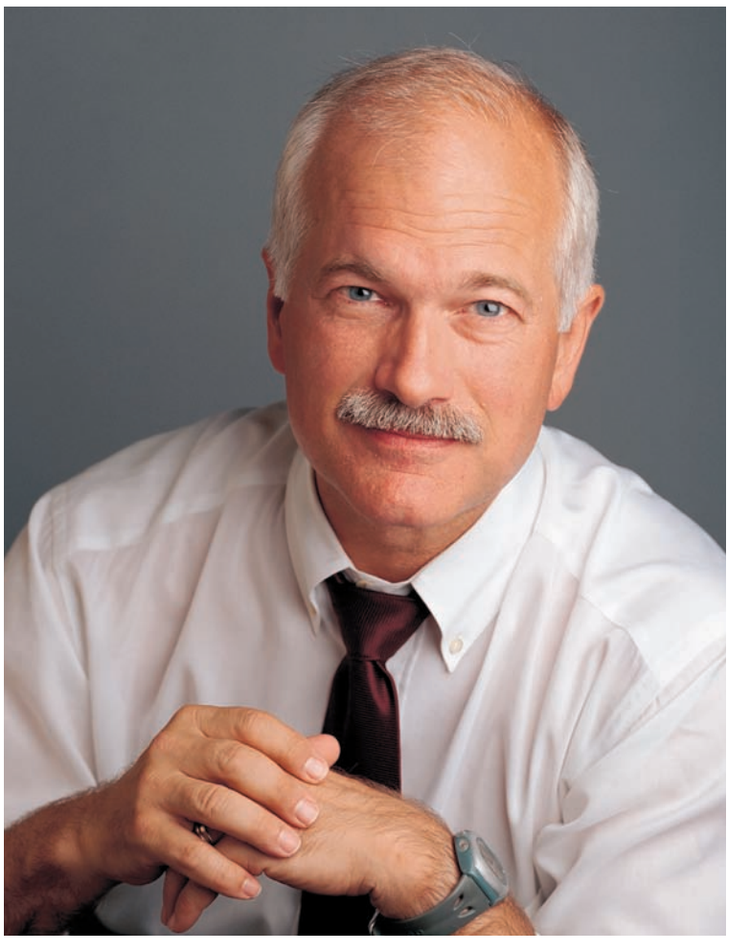
Dear friends:

Tens of thousands of Canadians have written to me in recent weeks to wish me well. I want to thank each and every one of you for your thoughtful, inspiring and often beautiful notes, cards and gifts. Your spirit and love have lit up my home, my spirit and my determination.

Unfortunately, my treatment has not worked out as I hoped. So I am giving this letter to my partner Olivia to share with you in the circumstance in which I cannot continue.

I recommend that Hull-Aylmer MP Nycole Turmel continue her work as our interim leader until a permanent successor is elected.

I recommend the party hold a leadership vote as early as possible in the New Year, on approximately the same timelines as in 2003, so that our new leader has ample time to reconsolidate our team, renew our party and our program and move forward towards the next election.



A few additional thoughts:

To other Canadians who are on journeys to defeat cancer and to live their lives, I say this: please don't be discouraged that my own journey hasn't gone as well as I had hoped. You must not lose your own hope. Treatments and therapies have never been better in the face of this disease. You have every reason to be optimistic, determined and focused on the future. My only other advice is to cherish every moment with those you love at every stage of your journey, as I have done this summer.

To the members of my party: we've done remarkable things together in the past eight years. It has been a privilege to lead the New Democratic Party and I am most grateful for your confidence, your support and the endless hours of volunteer commitment you have devoted to our cause. There will be those who will try to persuade you to give up our cause. But that cause is much bigger than any one leader. Answer them by recommitting with energy and determination to our work. Remember our proud history of social justice, universal health care, public pensions and making sure no one is left behind. Let's continue to move forward. Let's demonstrate in everything we do in the four years before us that we are ready to serve our beloved Canada as its next government.

To the members of our parliamentary caucus: I have been privileged to work with each and every one of you. Our caucus meetings were always the highlight of my week. It has been my role to ask a great deal from you. And now I am going to do so again. Canadians will be closely watching you in the months to come. Colleagues, I know you will make the tens of thousands of members of our party proud of you by demonstrating the same seamless teamwork and solidarity that has earned us the confidence of millions of Canadians in the recent election.

My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic.
– Jack Layton 1950-2011

To my fellow Quebecers: On May 2nd, you made an historic decision. You decided that the way to replace Canada's Conservative federal government with something better was by working together in partnership with progressive-minded Canadians across the country. You made the right decision then; it is still the right decision today and it will be the right decision right through to the next election, when we will succeed, together. You have elected a superb team of New Democrats to Parliament. They are going to be doing remarkable things in the years to come to make this country better for us all.

To young Canadians: All my life I have worked to make things better. Hope and optimism have defined my political career and I continue to be hopeful and optimistic about Canada. Young people have been a great source of inspiration for me. I have met and talked with so many of you about your dreams, your frustrations and your ideas for change. More and more, you are engaging in politics because you want to change things for the better. Many of you have placed your trust in our party. As my time in political life draws to a close, I want to share with you my belief in your power to change this country and this world. There are great challenges before you, from the overwhelming nature of climate change to the unfairness of an economy that excludes so many from our collective wealth and the changes necessary to build a more inclusive and generous Canada. I believe in you. Your energy, your vision, your passion for justice are exactly what this country needs today. You need to be at the heart of our economy, our political life and our plans for the present and the future.

And finally, to all Canadians: Canada is a great country, one of the hopes of the world. We can be a better one – a country of greater equality, justice and opportunity. We can build a prosperous economy and a society that shares its benefits more fairly. We can look after our seniors. We can offer better futures for our children. We can do our part to save the world's environment. We can restore our good name in the world. We can do all of these things because we finally have a party system at the national level where there are real choices, where your vote matters, where working for change can actually bring about change. In the months and years to come, New Democrats will put a compelling new alternative to you. My colleagues in our party are an impressive, committed team. Give them a careful hearing; consider the alternatives and consider that we can be a better, fairer, more equal country by working together. Don't let them tell you it can't be done.

My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic.

And we'll change the world.

All my very best,

Jack Layton

common ground

features

columns

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International Hearings on 9/11

Toronto September 8 to 11

A decade after the events of September 11, 2001, which resulted in the immediate deaths of nearly 3,000 people on American soil, countless victims from toxic dust and hundreds of thousands of deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq, international hearings on this pivotal event will begin in Toronto in September.

The events of September 11 provided a pretext for a "War on Terror" that has led to military invasions and occupations and attacks upon civil and human rights throughout the world. The credibility of the official investigation into the events of September 11, 2001, carried out by the US Government between 2003 and 2005, has been questioned by millions of citizens in the US and abroad, including the victims' family members, expert witnesses and international legal experts.

To date, open and transparent judicial hearings to question the official evidence provided by the US Government have never taken place in the US or abroad. Similarly, no perpetrators of the events of September 11 have ever been brought to justice on American soil.

To date, open and transparent judicial hearings to question the official evidence provided by the US Government have never taken place in the US or abroad.

A group of international citizens has therefore undertaken to privately fund and cause these independent hearings to take place. Because of the global ramifications of the events of 9/11, the initiators of this inquest have opted to select an international location outside of the US for these hearings to proceed. The city of Toronto was chosen as an ideal international location because of its proximity to New York, Washington and Shanksville, the three crime scenes.

Sponsored by the International Center for 9/11 Studies, the first four days of these hearings will take place at Toronto's Ryerson University between September 8 and 11, 2011. During these proceedings various expert witnesses will present evidence into the case.

All seating to attend the hearings is now sold out, but the hearings will also be broadcasted live via the Internet. Please visit our website at http://torontohearings.org for further information on how to link up and for background on the hearings and presenters.

Private funding to carry out these initial hearings is being provided by citizens from around the world. The Toronto Hearings will be moderated by Dr. Michael Keefer (Canada) and Dr. Matthew Witt (USA) and the final report will be edited by American attorney James Gourley.

Source: **International Center for 9/11 Studies** http://torontohearings.org

No perpetrators of the events of September 11 have ever been brought to justice on American soil.

Artwork created by Mark Dotzler.
Visit The Toronto Hearings website (torontohearings.org) for updates and information.

Iron deficiency impacts

From anemia to zoonosis, the benefits of medical screening need to outweigh the drawbacks

(zo•on•o•sis) n. a disease passed from animals to humans.

The best and most useful medical screening takes people with no symptoms and puts them through a safe and simple test that can accurately locate a disease in an early enough stage to stop it from hurting or killing them. After all, that's why you screen people – to prevent them from being hurt. Any medical screening program intended for entire populations of healthy people needs to be studied well to ensure the benefits outweigh the harms. Unfortunately, few medical screening tests fill this bill.

But some do. How about the screening of blood?

If you are a blood donor in Canada, as I am, you know if you want to donate, you will be put through a rigorous, demanding and sometimes embarrassing medical screening program that drills down into the very core of what it means to be perfectly healthy. Don't get me wrong; I'm not against this. Lax blood-screening protocols in the past led to thousands getting tainted blood – a scandal that still resonates in the medical community.

The good folks at Canadian Blood Service screen you for almost everything: your past, where you've lived, which diseases or medical procedures you've had, who you've had sex with and so on. They also screen your current state of health and the nurse will check your temperature, blood pressure and pulse. Your donated pint of red stuff will be tested for seven different diseases, including hepatitis, HIV, West Nile virus, syphilis and others. They are extremely careful about the purity of the blood supply.

The screening procedures blood donors go through is like the flip-side of standard medical screening: instead of looking for something that might hurt you, blood donor screening is all about the health of your neighbour, the soul who receives your blood.

One aspect of this screening I find particularly fascinating is the test for low iron. Once the blood donor clinic has ascertained who you are, they poke your finger and squeeze a drop of blood into a little vial of blue liquid. If the drop of blood sinks like a stone, you're OK. If not, you've probably got low iron. A machine has now replaced the blue vial, but if you've got low iron, you'll be barred from donating and told to go see your doctor.

I was totally surprised when this happened to me a few years ago. Here I was, feeling all hale and hearty, with none of the symptoms of low iron, such as tiredness, shortness of breath, etc. A quick trip to the lab determined my iron levels were borderline at 125 grams/litre and my doctor reassured me that, in the absence of symptoms of slow blood loss, which can sometimes go unnoticed, I didn't need to worry.

Anemia is so common that about 15 percent of blood donors are turned away because of it. It can be caused by either not absorbing enough iron into your blood or excreting blood, possibly the result of stomach ulcers, polyps and even colon cancer. Blood loss can be very gradual and you may not notice it until you've had your hemoglobin checked.

Is 'screening' for iron deficiency a useful medical test? Obviously, if you have any symptoms whatsoever your doctor will send you for more sensitive lab work to see if iron deficiency is suspected. But what about the general population? Should we all get checked out even if we feel well?

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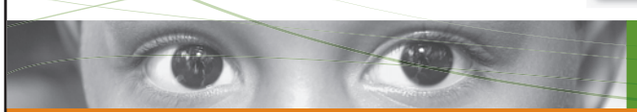

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There may be some things in favour of population testing for low iron, but, in practice, it doesn't happen in the context of a big program. Doctors generally manage it on their own, especially in patients with symptoms. Measuring hemoglobin levels is one of a few rare screening tests that can actually leave little doubt as to what is being measured.

In some parts of the world, anemia constitutes a major public health problem. As much as half the population of some countries might be suffering from anemia. Iron deficiency anemia was part of a discussion by a World Health Organization (WHO) study group in 1958 and it was only after that meeting that the WHO adopted criteria for blood hemoglobin levels below which a person is likely to be suffering from anemia.

According to the WHO, women of childbearing age screened for anemia have the highest incidence of the condition. Women are more likely to be anemic than men because of the iron loss that happens through menstruation. In most countries, routine maternity care includes 'screening' the blood of pregnant women to make sure iron deficiency, which could harm their developing fetus, is not present.

Beyond menstruation, however, there are other ways to become anemic. Blood diseases as well as other diseases, particularly those caused by parasites, are often the culprits.

The WHO's 1968 publication *Principles and Practices of Screening for Disease* created what is likely a seminal document recognizing the many problems with screening. It concluded anemia is "probably one of the more acceptable conditions for screening under present circumstances; it is highly prevalent, can be sufficiently accurately detected and, when due to primary iron deficiency, responds excellently to treatment."

The level of iron in your blood is a marker for disease and certainly in the developing world there are a whole range of potential causes.

Anemia is so common that about 15 percent of blood donors are turned away because of it… As much as half the population of some countries might be suffering from anemia.

But back to the developed world.

My research into medical screening over the last year has led me to conclude the "test early, test often" axiom is only justified for a few worthwhile, well-studied and valuable screening programs while most of those programs are harmful and prevent few deaths.

Which leads me to the "what if?" question: What if, instead of a world where screening harms people inadvertently while searching for more and more elusive diseases, we had something different? What if we used very simple technology to find the markers of deadly diseases that could be intervened at an early stage, before they went on to hurt people – better yet, if the diseases in question affected a huge swath of humanity suffering untold (but highly preventable) miseries?

This brings us to zoonoses, which are diseases passed from animals to humans. In Canada, you can easily pick up parasites like roundworm or hookworm from a pet, but other sexy and rarer zoonotic diseases such as monkeypox, anthrax and rabies get much more attention. In the western world, we don't screen for zoonotic diseases, but shouldn't we be doing it in the developing world?

The WHO's stance is "iron deficiency affects more people than any other condition, constituting a public health condition of epidemic *continued p.14…*

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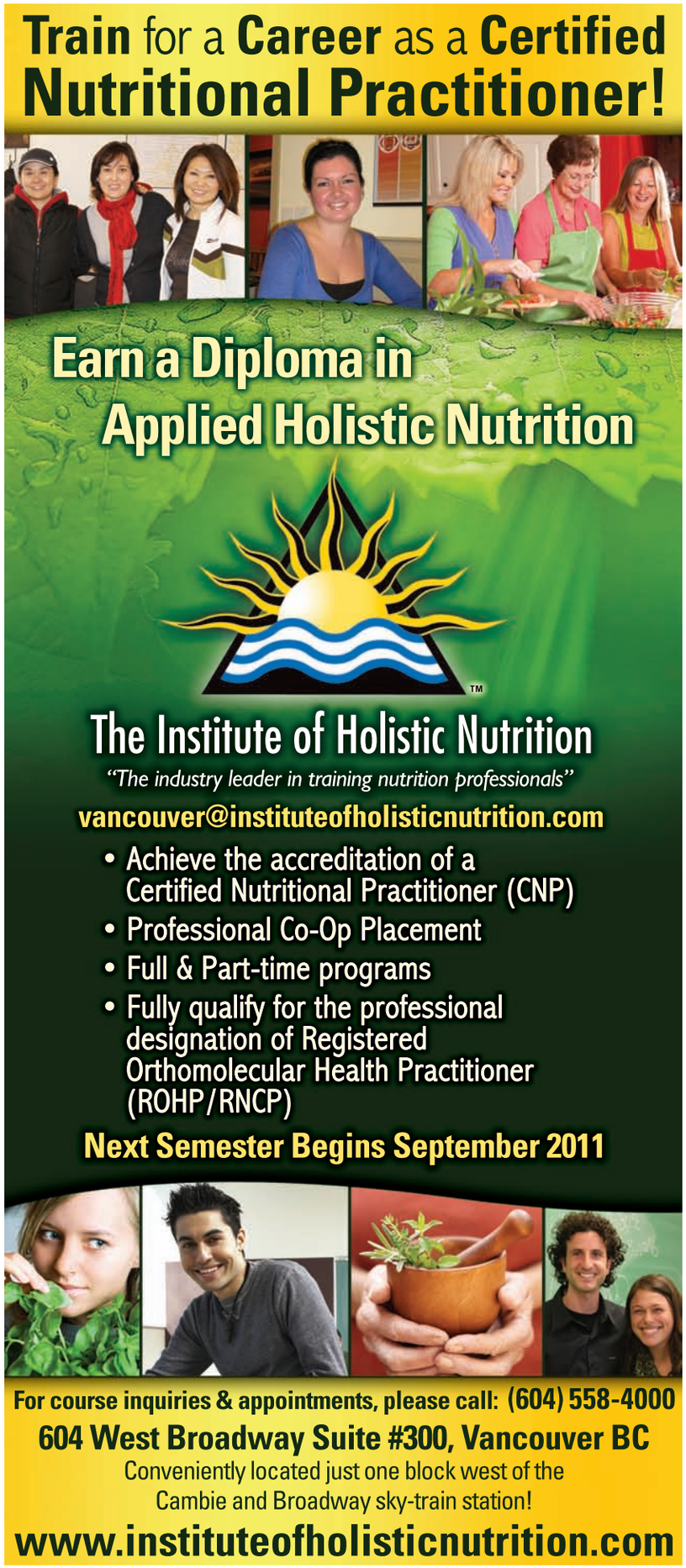
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Mike Adams, HealthRanger

Will the *real blueberries* please stand up?

photo © Olivier Le Queinec

The blueberries found in blueberry bagels, cereals, breads and muffins are real blueberries right? Wrong! Award-winning investigative journalist Mike Adams, the HealthRanger, exposes the deceptive chemical ingredients and dishonest marketing of "blueberry" products from big-name food and cereal companies. The blueberries, it turns out, are made from artificial colours, hydrogenated oils and liquid sugars. See www.FoodInvestigations.com

Pictures of blueberries are prominently displayed on the front of many food packages and on boxes of muffins, cereals and breads. But turn the packages around and suddenly the blueberries disappear. They're gone, replaced in the ingredients list with sugars, oils and artificial colours derived from petrochemicals.

This bag of blueberry bagels [featured in the video at www.foodinvestigations.com] sold at Target stores is made with blueberry bits. And while actual blueberries are found further down the ingredients list, the blueberry bits themselves don't even contain bits of blueberries. They're made entirely from sugar, corn cereal, modified food starch, partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, artificial flavour, cellulose gum, salt and artificial colours like Blue #2, Red #40, Green #3 and Blue #1.

What's missing from that list? Well, blueberries. Where did the blueberries go?

They certainly didn't end up in Total Blueberry Pomegranate Cereal. This cereal, made by General Mills, contains neither blueberries nor pomegranates. They're nowhere to be found. But the cereal is made with red #40, Blue #2 and other artificial colours. And it's even sweetened with sucralose, a chemical sweetener. And that's in addition to the sugar, corn syrup and brown sugar syrup that's already on the label.

A lot of products that imply they're made with blueberries contain no blueberries at all. And many that do contain a tiny amount of blueberries cut their recipes with artificial blueberry ingredients to make it look like their products contain more blueberries than they really do.

Kellogg's Blueberry Pop Tarts shows a picture of plump blueberries right on the front of the box. But inside the box, there's a lot more high fructose corn syrup than actual blueberries. And the corn syrup is given a blueberry colour with the addition of – guess what? – Red #40, Blue #1 and Blue #2 chemicals.

Kellogg's Frosted Mini Wheats also come in a Blueberry Muffin variety, with fresh blueberries prominently featured on the front of the package. But inside, there are no actual blueberries to be found. Instead, you get "blueberry flavoured crunchlets" – yes, crunchlets – made from sugars, soybean oil, Red #40 and Blue #2.

And, if you can believe it, the side panel of this box features the "Frosted Mini Wheats Bite Size" logo, followed by the words "blueberry muffin" with pictures of blueberries, finally followed by "The Whole Truth." Except it really isn't the whole truth at all. It's more like a half-truth.

These marketing deceptions even continue on Kellogg's website, where one page claims, "New Special K Blueberry Fruit Crisps are filled with blueberries and drizzled with vanilla icing." Except they aren't, really. What they're really filled with is apple powder, partially hydrogenated soybean oil, fructose, sugar, artificial colours Red #40 and Blue #1, all enhanced with a dash of blueberry puree concentrate.

> When consumers buy blueberry cereals, muffins and mixes, they're under the impression that they're buying real blueberries...They're actually buying blue colouring chemicals mixed with hydrogenated oils and liquid sugars.

Even seemingly "healthy" blueberry products can be deceptive. Betty Crocker's Fiber One Blueberry muffin mix enhances its small amount of actual blueberries with petrochemical colours, too: Red #40, Blue #1 and Blue #2.

At least Betty Crocker's Blueberry Muffin Mix admits it contains no real blueberries. Well, if you read the fine print, that is. Its ingredients reveal "Artificial blueberry flavor bits" which are made from dextrose, Corn Flour, Partially Hydrogenated Soybean Oil, Sugar, Citric Acid, Artificial Flavour, and of course the obligatory Blue #1 and Red #40.

When consumers buy blueberry cereals, muffins and mixes, they're under the impression that they're buying real blueberries. No ordinary consumer realizes they're actually buying blue colouring chemicals mixed with hydrogenated oils and liquid sugars. That's why this common industry practice of faking the blueberries is so deceptive.

Why can't food companies just be more honest about it? Nature's Path Organic Optimum Blueberry-Cinnamon Breakfast Cereal contains – get this – both blueberries and cinnamon.

Better yet, you won't find any red #40, Blue #2 or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils in Nature's Path products. They even use organic blueberries and organic cinnamon.

Health Valley Low-Fat Blueberry Tarts are also made with real blueberries. You won't find any artificial colouring chemicals in this box.

So why can't Kellogg, Betty Crocker, General Mills and Target stores use real blueberries in their products instead of deceptively formulating them with artificial petrochemical colours that mimic the purple colour of blueberries?

It's probably because real blueberries are expensive. And artificial blueberry bits, made with sugar, partially hydrogenated oils and artificial colours, are dirt-cheap. If these companies can fool consumers into thinking they're buying real blueberries in their products, they can command a price premium that translates into increased profits.

Once again, in the food industry, deception pays off. And it pays big.

So what can you do to make sure you don't get scammed by a food company trying to sell you red #40 and Blue #2 as if they were real blueberries? Read the ingredients. If you see artificial colours on the list – and they're usually found at the very bottom of the ingredients list – just don't buy that product.

Put it back on the shelf and choose something else that's not deceptively marketed. And that's how you solve "the case of the missing blueberries."

Mike Adams, also known as the HealthRanger, is the co-creator of **NaturalNews.TV,** an online resource that shares videos on health, green living, happiness, fitness and self-improvement. It also features Adams' mini-documentary series **Food Investigations** where he reveals shocking truths about foods. Adams is also the editor of **NaturalNews.com** and the co-founder of the non-profit Consumer Wellness Center (www.ConsumerWellness.org).

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Phenomenal food garden

Seed selection: what to grow? Ask yourself what you most like to eat. There's not much point planting a row of space-hogging cabbages if no one likes cabbage. It also makes sense to grow food that costs more, especially if space is limited in your garden. To select plants that will thrive in your garden's microclimate, check the number of days to maturity.

Soil fertility: add "The Four Secrets of Successful Soil Building" – compost, manure, leaves and seaweed – to your soil every year and notice an incredible difference in productivity. Plants remove nutrients from the soil as they grow, which means soil quality degrades over time.

Lots of compost: make what I call "Super Duper Compost." For layers, use leaves, weeds (no seeds), herbaceous clippings, manure, grass clippings, spoiled hay, sawdust, chicken litter, etc. To make it super-duper, add layers of comfrey leaves, nettles, seaweed and dried horsetail. Tip: Don't add kitchen waste because it attracts rodents.

Companion planting: plant diversity is key to healthy gardening because communities of plants work together to keep bugs at bay, attract pollinators and improve plant growth. Grow a diversity of food crops together with hedgerows, flowers, grasses, herbs and berries and allow nature to control potential problems.

Crop rotation: if the same plants are grown in the same place year after year, problems arise. After seven years, club root develops in brassicas; after 10 years, white rot develops in garlic; bean-weevil populations explode where beans are continually grown. Moving plants around inhibits pests and diseases, as the lifecycle can be broken.

Pest control: in my experience, the only way to keep deer out is with eight-foot-high fencing. Raccoons and birds can cause a ripe corn or cherry crop to disappear overnight, so net plants as the crop ripens. Collecting slugs at dusk helps keep their populations down. To control whiteflies in the greenhouse, cover cardboard squares with bright yellow plastic and smear with sticky Tanglefoot.

Starting seeds early: instead of direct seeding, grow seedlings in the greenhouse whenever possible and transplant outdoors when conditions are settled. Improvise a greenhouse with cold frames and cloches, which can be made inexpensively from recycled glass windows and wooden frames.

Weed control: the best time to remove weeds from the garden is when the soil is moist. At the start of each season, go through the garden and do a major weeding to prevent weeds setting seed. At the end of the season, smother any new weed seeds with a thick layer of mulch.

Seed saving: grow open pollinated seeds and save your own seeds – those that have not had their genetic makeup tampered with through hybridization or genetic modification. Plants adapt to the conditions they grow in, which is why using organic seed is best if you are an organic gardener. Local seeds have an edge; seeds grown in different bioregions have adapted to the local climate conditions.

Winter gardening: there's no need to leave beds empty from October to April when so many food plants can be harvested in winter. In cooler areas, a cold frame will be necessary, but growing some food is still possible.

September 23

Free talk and booksigning – The Zero-Mile Diet – with Carolyn Herriot at Banyen Books, 3608 West 4th Ave., 6:30-8PM, 604-737-8858. Sponsored by Word on the Street. More info at www.banyen.com

Carolyn Herriot is author of **A Year on the Garden Path: A 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide** and **The Zero-Mile Diet: A Year-round Guide to Growing Organic Food** (Harbour Publishing). She grows "Seeds of Victoria" at the Garden Path Centre in Victoria, BC. The Garden Path Centre is open to visitors every Friday, 10AM-6PM until September 25. http://earthfuture.com/gardenpath

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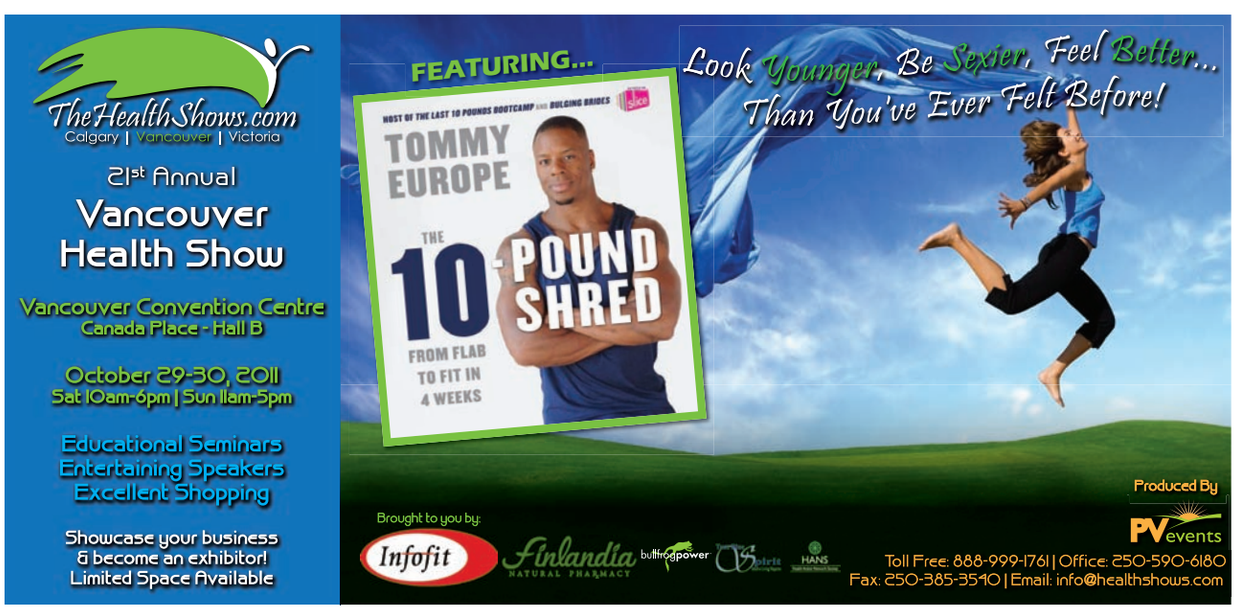

Acid-alkaline balance

Several decades ago, western nutrition had little interest in acid-base balance, yet it was a central theme in macrobiotic eating and in eastern approaches to health. Things have changed and western scientists now recognize dietary patterns can put an immense burden on the body to restore an optimal acid-base balance. Our kidneys, in partnership with our lungs, must maintain the acidity or pH of our body fluids within a very narrow range (7.35-7.45). A pH of 0 to 7 is acidic (with the lowest numbers being more acidic); numbers above seven indicate increasingly alkaline pHs.

Meats, dairy products and grains are acid-forming, meaning that after these foods are digested and metabolized, they influence body fluids and the urine to be acidic. This effect is related to the amounts of phosphorus, sulphur and protein in these foods. Buckwheat and quinoa are less acid-forming than wheat, rice and other cereal grains.

Vegetables and fruits are alkali-forming, counterbalancing the effects of animal products and grains. Although we may think of fruits as acidic because of their sour taste, this acidity is quickly disposed of during digestion. Some fruits – plums, prunes, cranberries, rhubarb and sour cherries – are acid-forming because they contain organic acids that are not completely broken down to bicarbonate. However, the vast majority of fruits and vegetables have an alkaline effect, related to the presence of potassium, magnesium and calcium. Nuts and legumes tend to be moderately acid-forming. It is interesting to note that humans evolved on a diet much more alkali-forming than today's eating patterns.

The table below shows the Potential Renal Acid Load (PRAL) of various food groups. In this system, the positive numbers above "0" indicate foods that acidify our bodies. The negative numbers make our system more alkaline. Diets centred on meats, cheeses, wheat and rice are heavily acid-forming. When you look at family meals, restaurant menus and the contents of supermarket shopping carts, it becomes obvious our diets tip the scales in an acid-forming direction. A diet providing plenty of vegetables and fruits is highly important in maintaining the slightly alkaline pH that sustains health.

Potential Renal Acid Load of Food Groups (Food Group per 100g and PRAL)

Meat, poultry	9.5	Nuts, seeds	5.0
Eggs	8.2	Legumes	2.6
Fish	7.9	Oils	0
Milk, dairy products	1.0 to 23.6*	Vegetables	-2.8
Grains, grain products	3.5 to 7.0	Fruits, fruit juices	-3.1

*PRAL is particularly high for processed and low fat cheeses.

To maintain our necessary pH range of 7.35-7.45, we need not avoid acidic foods entirely, but instead get a mix that is just slightly alkaline overall. The body manages best when it has plenty of vegetables and fruits to offset moderate amounts of acid-forming foods.

Diets high in acid-forming foods can have damaging consequences due to our cells being kept in an environment that is too acidic (mild metabolic acidosis). Impacts include the wasting of muscles, the formation of kidney stones, kidney damage and the dissolution of bone. With age, our bodies become even less able to manage the imbalance. In next month's column, we will explore how acid-forming diets affect our muscles, bones and kidneys. Also see *Becoming Raw* by Davis and Melina.

October 2: Explore ways to tip your diet in a favourable alkaline direction with tasty foods at Earthsave's Taste of Health event. Presenters include Vesanto Melina. RoundHouse Community Centre, 181 Roundhouse Mews, Yaletown, Vancouver. www.earthsave.ca/

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...*Cassels from pg. 7*

proportions." Further, "the numbers are staggering: 2 billion people – over 30% of the world's population – are anemic, many due to iron deficiency, and in resource-poor areas, this is frequently exacerbated by infectious diseases."

Other than HIV and tuberculosis, the major diseases afflicting mankind and the ones with the greatest death toll are zoonotic diseases. Malaria (transmitted by mosquitoes), hookworm (a worm that lives in the intestine and causes anemia) and schistosomiasis (a parasite carried by freshwater snails) afflict literally billions of people around the world, causing high levels of anemia in many places on the globe.

Iron deficiency may be the true silent killer, exacting more of a toll in terms of illness, premature death and wasted human energy than anything else we know. Millions of people are home to parasites, literally sucking their blood. They become anemic and struggle to consume enough protein-rich food, functioning at only a fraction of their normal energy level. And guess what? The poorest and the least educated among us are most vulnerable to iron deficiency.

Would more screening help? In the developing world, almost more of anything would help, but, at the very least, systematically educating the population about iron deficiency would be simple. We know the tests for iron deficiency are quick and cheap and solutions revolve around controlling infection and improving nutrition.

Iron deficiency literally sucks the energy and vitality out of development.

Forty years ago, the famous Dr. Julian Tudor Hart coined the term the "Inverse Care Law," which, in its elegant simplicity, states, "the availability of good medical care tends to vary inversely with the need for it in the population served." Which is to say, the more urgent our medical needs are, the less likely they are to be met.

I propose the 'Inverse Screening Law' is alive and well too, where huge sums of money are spent on useless and harmful population screening while almost nothing is spent on screening and treating anemia, a condition suffered by billions in our global community.

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria. Read more of what he's writing about at www.alancassels.com

Tuesday, September 13th
Out of Mind
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Speakers:
Dr. Gabor Maté
Author of *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction*
Rick Doblin, Ph.D.
Executive Director of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies
Hosted By:
Philippe Lucas, M.A.
Victoria City Councillor & Research Affiliate with the Center for Addictions Research of BC
7:30pm
Alix Goolden Hall
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Tickets: $20/advance, $25/door, $10 with valid student ID.
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FOR MORE INFO
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Ego as judge

How often have you or someone you know said, "he thinks that just because…?" These types of expressions seem ubiquitous in our communications. Let's think about this for a moment. When we do this, we are *assuming* we know the thoughts and motivations of others. Essentially, we think we can read someone's mind, but we are actually projecting our own thoughts onto another.

This is the work of our pesky egos. Generally, these types of assumptions are part of a judgment or criticism. There are two problems here: we are being judge and jury with no input from the defendant and we are repeating our guilty verdict to another as though it is truth.

Why does ego do this? It's because ego likes to be right. In order for ego to be right, it has to make the other wrong. This is the nature of the polarity thinking so characteristic of ego. Ego shares its judgments with others in order to marshall support for itself. This is the essence of gossip. It is like a toxic cloud released into the environment, be it an office, school or neighborhood. It creates division, ill will and negativity. Taken to its extreme, it is the bullying in schools that has led to student suicides. We all agree this is wrong, yet adults do it all the time. Children overhear mom in conversations where someone is being judged so they think it's okay.

Let's go back for a moment to the mind reading. If you have ever been in a heated discussion with a significant other and he or she said, "Oh yeah, well *you* think…." My guess is the person was wrong about your thoughts and you did not like it one bit. How do you defend yourself when someone assumes to know your mind better that you do? You can disagree with their assessment, saying you do not think that, and the reply is "Oh yes you do." This is completely negating and it is a battle, not a communication.

When ego gets into judgment, it only creates negativity, conflict, distance, resentment, distrust and drama. It is not healthy for our bodies or our relationships. How do we change the patterns so we put only good energy into the world rather than the toxic kind?

It really has nothing to do with other people and what they do. It has to do with an inner commitment about the kind of person we want to be. It is about making conscious choices rather than defaulting to an unevolved ego.

We all belong to the same tribe and every tribe needs some wise ones.

If we check in with our higher wisdom, which we all have, we *know* which behaviours are negative or unkind. We all learned this as children when we watched *Bambi* and Thumper said, "If you can't say something nice, don't say nothin' at all."

Our conscious choice as adults is to stop judging and criticizing others and to not talk negatively about people, particularly behind their backs. It requires courage to stop others who are doing this as well. Significantly, when we do this we raise the consciousness of those around us. Some of us – many in fact – must begin to regularly choose the high road if we are ever to evolve beyond the conflict mentality that characterizes so much of our world.

We all belong to the same tribe and every tribe needs some wise ones.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, CDs and the new "Creating Healthy Relationships" series, visit www.gwen.ca See display ad this issue.

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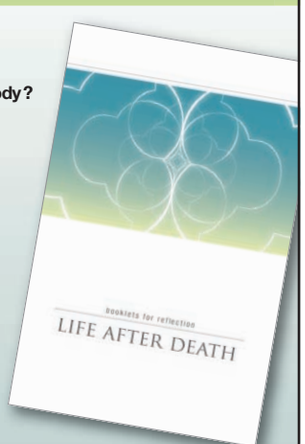

Just now

an interview with Eckhart Tolle

To read Eckhart Tolle's latest column, please see the current print edition of Common Ground. For copyright reasons, we are authorized to publish this column in our print version only.

JR: In your new book, I feel like you're the modern equivalent of the explorers that came to the new world, but an explorer and documenter of consciousness, discovering a new world.

ET: Yes, discovering is the right word. It's not that you need to make a great effort to attain it or bring it about or acquire it. It's discovering it's already there in you – conscious awareness that's obscured, or partially obscured, in many people. It's a discovery of something already there.

It's like waking up after a dream, because identification with the thinking mind and its stories and the old emotional conditioning is like being immersed in a kind of dream world, which very often turns into a nightmare – acting out old conditioned patterns again and again. The whole structure of the egoic mind is an old dysfunction.

There's some evidence that the ego started about 6,000 years ago, but nobody can say for sure. Before that, humans were in a state of innocence. When we go beyond the dysfunction of the ego, we regain our original innocence, but on a much deeper level. This is why Jesus said unless we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, returning to the original innocence, and at the same time going much deeper into that with full awareness – that's the process. We're coming out of thousands of years of dreadful suffering, almost the whole of recorded history of humanity. If you really look at it in an unbiased way, as if you'd never seen it before, one cannot but admit that, to a large extent, 80 to 90 percent of it is a history of pathological insanity, the suffering that humans have created for themselves and, of course, inflicting it upon others.

JR: And exporting it through colonization to the new world.

ET: Yes, so the important part of the awakening process is the realization of the insanity in human history, collectively, to this day playing itself out in world events. Also, to be aware of the insanity within oneself – old, dysfunctional patterns that come again and again that create suffering. So when you see that you're insane, then you're not completely insane. Sanity comes the moment you realize the fact of insanity. To see insanity is not a negative thing.

JR: At least you're out of denial.

ET: Yes, that's why in the film A Beautiful Mind, for example, which is about a mathematical genius who did have a mental dysfunction, his mind was developed in certain areas but he was also insane. The viewer of the film doesn't know that until a certain point when the character realizes that many of his experiences are delusions. At that moment, his healing begins. He's not cured yet, but his healing begins because he's recognized his own insanity. That recognition can only come out of sanity, which is the awareness of unconditioned consciousness.

JR: I remember you saying before you published your last book that the next one would be about why there isn't peace on this planet. Was finding a solution one of the major intentions of A New Earth?

ET: Yes, to see the nature of the major dysfunction. That's why I talk quite a bit about the ego in this book. We need to recognize the nature of the dysfunction. Sometimes, even very great Eastern teachers sometimes neglect that part because they're not really touched by the magnitude of, especially, the Western ego. So it's very important for us to see the dysfunction so that we can recognize it when it arises.

Part of the new book is about recognizing the ego, which I regard as a semi-autonomous energy. It's an energy field. Every thought you think is an energy field. It has a form and then it dissolves and then there is another form. The ego itself is an energy field and it has a collective and individual aspect. Every indi-

vidual ego is part of the collective. They're connected. Every individual is a manifestation of the collective. To recognize that is essential because the ego, being a very clever entity, has many ways of reappearing. Even if you've seen it in one disguise, it can suddenly reappear in a new one.

You might suddenly realize your whole sense of self, identity, is being derived from your possessions and social position. You see that your whole sense of identity is bound up with that and you recognize one aspect of ego. Well, usually it only comes to people when they suffer, when the identification with something no longer works…

It's recognizing the ego in its many disguises. I've met Buddhist monks who had enormous egos without knowing it. I remember being in a monastery afraid to approach them because they seemed so aloof. Yet I've met other Buddhist monks who were like little children and it was a joy to talk to them because they'd laugh and not take themselves seriously at all. They didn't take the whole Buddhist

thing seriously either, yet they practised it knowing it was only a form and they weren't identified with it.

There's a dimension in us that has nothing to do with content. Self-realization is that I am not that. I'm not my story, not my grievances and hang-ups, not the story of me that I'm telling other people at parties or repeating in my head again and again. That is only form. It's temporary.

When you see what you're not, it's already liberating. Something inside you breathes a sigh of relief. Then, of course, the mind begins to ask, "What are you if you are not that?" It wants an answer. In other words, it wants some new form. It wants a new thought. There must be a thought that I am. But it doesn't work like that. That's why the great book the Tao Te Ching starts with the line that the Tao that can be spoken of is not the true Tao because Tao – in the ancient Chinese way of putting it – is the formless dimension. You could say pure consciousness, but with any term we use we have to be careful it's not mistaken for "It." Otherwise, the mind comes in and says, "Oh, consciousness, yes. I believe that I'm consciousness." It's not another belief. It's finding that spaciousness inside yourself that's there when you let go of identification of form.

Excerpted from **Just now: a two-part interview with Eckhart Tolle** by Joseph Roberts. Read the full interview online. Go to www.commonground.ca Click on archives. Click on 2007 at the top of the page. For part one, click on September 2007. For part two, click on October 2007.

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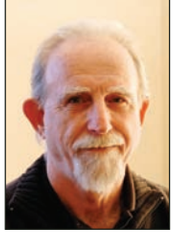

Mac McLaughlin

ZODIAC

StarWise September 2011

IN ANCIENT TIMES, the astrologers would cast the royal horoscope of their King believing that whatever fate had in store for him was also the fate of the country and thusly themselves. Today, everyone and everything has a horoscope, be it a person, company, corporation, marriage or the start of any event. Canada began as a nation on July 1, 1867. The stars tell a wondrous tale of the energy that would prevail from that day onward for our beloved Canada. We have the dog whisperer, horse whisperer and, I guess, star whisperers as well.

Our nation was born just hours before a new moon in the sign of Cancer, the sign most related to family, caring, providing and protecting. We think of Cancer as feminine, nurturing and somewhat connected to antiquity, history and such. While that is all true, Cancer the crab can also produce action and hero figures such as Sylvester Stallone's Rambo. Stallone is a Cancer and the movie was filmed here in BC. Cancer types are tenacious and fiercely protective of their own. They are also more than willing to lend a hand to those in need wherever and whenever the case may be.

ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19
Out with the old and in with the new is the mantra of the times. Changes are in the wind and it is best to ride them, as best you can. The truth sets you free as a new reality dawns upon you.

TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21
It's your time to shine. Opportunities await thee. The stars are leaning in your favour. Others notice and pick up on your integrity, honesty and loyalty. Forget the stars! Go do your thing. Just don't go overboard or get too crazy with anything.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20
You may be restless and sensing that changes are close at hand. You are right. Career and home topics become intensified. Certainly, move towards what makes you happy. Jupiter enters Gemini next June and is a great birthday present bringing breakthroughs and abundance.

CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22
The Cardinal signs – Cancer, Libra, Capricorn and Aries – are strongly activated bringing a very challenging and exciting time in which great changes manifest and you may be at your best. Cohesion, blending and joining are key phrases symbolizing September's highly charged energy.

LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22
Kick back and enjoy the late summer days and dream away. A little bit of R&R will do you good. Mars visits Leo beginning September 18, bringing action, attraction, adventure and excitement and possibly some danger in late September and throughout October.

VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22
The new moon on August 28 bodes well and brings promises of abundance and opportunity throughout the month. The full moon on September 12 indicates excitement as a series of revelations illuminate your inner consciousness. A lively time unfolds.

LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22
Saturn reaches the middle of the scales in early September. You can check how you're doing by what is unfolding in your life. Hard times come in order to correct problems and good times come for those that have been willing to do so.

SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21
The stars are favouring Scorpio throughout September. Strong effort on your part will pay dividends just like working out at the gym does. Mix and mingle and let others discover your talents and gifts. Life intensifies towards the end of the month.

The planet Uranus is tightly conjunct with the Sun and Moon in our collective birth chart bringing a true sense of originality and independence as well as a strong humanitarian flavouring witnessed within our multi-cultured societies from coast to coast. This conjunction may also make us stand out in our own very unique ways. Jupiter casts a wonderful blessing our way in the form of a triangle to the Sun, Moon and Uranus. We are loved and respected for our liberal and fair treatment of humanity and the average Canadian is perceived as friendly and open. But we have our underbelly too. Fiery Mars opposes Jupiter and although we never spoil for a fight and perhaps never misuse our might, we are very competitive – fiercely so. Ask any hockey-crazed fan.

Seemingly, we have been on the ropes as the world economies go through a big shakeout. The stars are hinting the next few years will be some of the best for us. Jupiter brings his blessings in the form of opportunities for growth and success. In the face of all the gloom and doom out there, I don't see it for Canada. Prime Minister Harper's Venus is close to Venus in Canada's chart and Jupiter passes over that area in September of 2012 bringing expansion, cooperation and growth. Then, in late June of 2013, Jupiter enters Cancer bringing more breakthroughs and more of a tendency towards harmony. Relax and enjoy for these will probably be called the good old days.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21
Career objectives come into play. Home and family figure too. A move or travel plans might be the case. The cosmic wheel spins a bit easier for Sagittarius these days, meaning that you can get further with less effort than most this month.

AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19
If you have planets in the latter half of Aquarius, you may feel like you are visiting another planet for the first 10 days of the month. Travel plans may materialize and romantic, intellectual, artistic and spiritual energies become enhanced from mid-month onwards.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19
Pluto moving through Capricorn took Premier Gordon Campbell down. He resurrected himself with a very cushy job as Canada's high commissioner to the UK. A death and a birth took place and this is quite reflective of Pluto's power of destruction and renewal for all Capricorns.

PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20
Mercury and Neptune continue their dance and the combination is very good for dreamers, inventers, psychics, musicians, artists and actors. But it can make it darn tough to get anything figured out in a concrete way. Take your time and let life unfold its mysteries.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109

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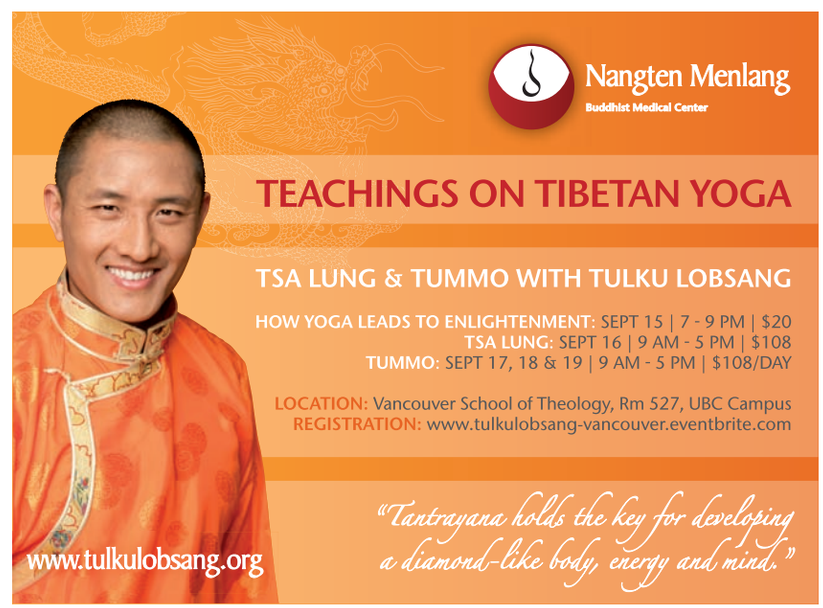
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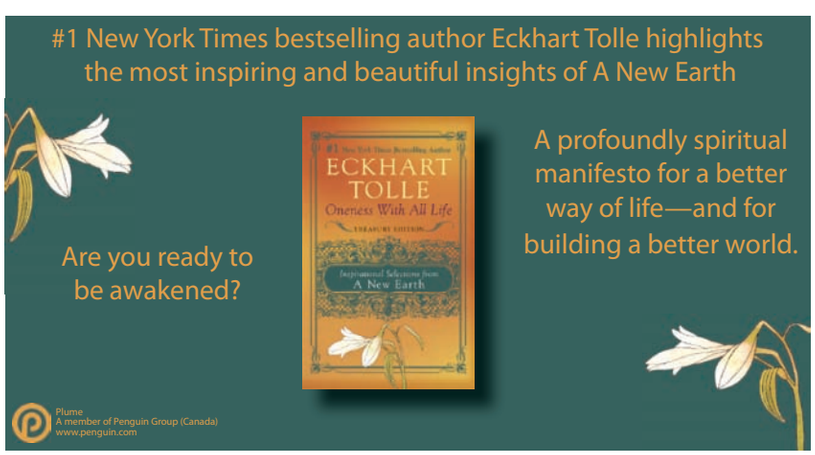

Andrea Burton

Health workers lead alternative medicine use

A recent study by Johnson, Ward, Knutson and Sendelbach suggests healthcare workers (at 76 percent) are more likely than the general population (at 63 percent) to use complementary and alternative medicine. This is an important step forward for CAM; doctors and nurses regularly rate in the top five most trusted professions in Canada and their willingness to embrace and endorse CAM as a positive add-on to conventional medicine promotes the acceptance of this important field.

Over time, many theories once considered controversial have become part of good healthcare practice. As a result, more and more Canadians are using elements of complementary and alternative medicine without even realizing these practices – therapeutic massage, acupuncture, etc. – were considered unorthodox a mere 20-years- ago. A 2007 study undertaken by the Fraser Institute found approximately 54 percent of Canadian adults had used CAM therapies in 2006 – a more than four percent increase since 1997. A similar study in the US found a 10 percent increase over a similar time period.

A growing body of work suggests CAM will only continue to increase in popularity as more and more consumers recognize the benefits of complementary or alternative therapies and treatments. And consumers have become savvier when it comes to managing their own healthcare. New technologies, access to the Internet and higher levels of education have made health information accessible to most Canadians. For many, the opportunity to investigate complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is appealing and adding elements of CAM to their regular health regimen is a natural next step.

The Dr. Rogers Prize Colloquium, which is being hosted in Vancouver on September 23, will examine how four Canadian clinics are currently integrating CAM with conventional medicine. The $250,000 Dr. Rogers Prize celebrates the contributions of leaders and trailblazers who have dared to pursue new and unfamiliar approaches that fall under the expansive umbrella of "complementary and alternative medicine." Named after one of BC's leading advocates for CAM, the Dr. Rogers Prize is awarded biennially to an individual who has made a significant contribution in advancing this important field. The gala award dinner brings together a wide range of practitioners in the CAM field and has become a gathering place where ideas and discussions can flourish.

Moderated by Harvard University's Allen Grossman, the innovative Colloquium features a panel discussion with representatives from the four clinics. Panelists will tackle questions about the successes and barriers to building and maintaining these clinics and share some of the lessons they have learned. The four clinics represented are:

1. Integrative Healing Arts (Vancouver): Founded by naturopaths Larry Chan and Eric Posen, this clinic helps clients achieve optimal health through the integration of modern science and traditional healing arts. The clinic offers naturopathic and chiropractic medicine, massage therapy and rolfing, Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture, nutritional consultation, weight management programs and a naturopathic spa featuring the Rejuveness system.

2. InspireHealth (Vancouver): Founded by physicians Hal Gunn and Roger Rogers, this clinic focuses on integrated cancer care. Its underlying philosophy is that treatment must be provided for a patient's mind, body and spirit. InspireHealth uses an integrated approach that combines standard cancer treatments with nutrition, exercise and emotional and spiritual support.

3. Integrative Health Institute (Toronto): Founded by naturopaths Meghan Walker and Erin Wiley, this clinic was founded on the premise of open and

constructive communication between practitioners regarding all aspects of patient care. Inspired by the experiences of naturopaths working with women and their families in rural Africa, IHI believes in providing patients with access to varied medical philosophies and the practitioners who share a common vision for integration.

4. The Seekers Centre for Integrative Medicine (Ottawa): Founded by physician Richard Nahas, this clinic focuses on utilizing the best therapies from the worlds of alternative, traditional and conventional medicine to help people heal. The centre focuses on several key programs: Integrative Cancer Program of Care, Pain Program of Care, Cardiac Program of Care and Women's Health Program of Care.

Following the panel presentations, attendees will have an opportunity to participate in breakout groups and discussions about CAM in Canada, both now and in the future. All participants will be encouraged to consider ways the community can develop stronger networks to improve discussion and collaboration throughout the year.

> Consumers have become savvier when it comes to managing their own healthcare... adding elements of CAM to their regular health regimen is a natural next step.

The day will culminate in the presentation of the $250,000 Dr. Rogers Prize and a gala dinner. "Due to the number of significant contributors in the field, and the difficulty in discriminating between their achievements, the 2007 and 2009 Prizes were split by a hung jury," stated Juror Dr. Joseph Pizzorno. "However, we promise you one winner in 2011!" The 2009 Prize was split between Dr. Hal Gunn and Dr. Bud Rickhi and the 2007 Prize between Dr. Abram Hoffer and Dr. Alastair Cunningham.

The Dr. Rogers Prize Gala and Colloquium will provide Canadian leaders and innovators in the field with an opportunity to network, discuss and share their ideas for how to move complementary and alternative medicine forward in the months and years to come. This is an exciting era as integration and collaboration between CAM and conventional medicine becomes more of a reality. The Dr. Rogers Colloquium will move the field one step closer to realizing its full potential.

For more information about the Dr. Rogers Prize, Colloquium and Gala on September 23, visit www.drrogersprize.org

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Geoff Olson

Time, *dreams* & death

Spreading ashes & gathering memories

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"Did you bring mom and dad?" Luckily, I had. I'm the absent-minded one in the family and to my sister's relief, I remembered to pack my parents' ashes in the trunk of my car.

My family had rented a ski cabin in northern British Columbia for a weekend get-together and ceremony. On Saturday afternoon, the relatives gathered around a table and rummaged through the contents of my parents' safety deposit box. The estate had all been settled and the money apportioned. Now, there were only loose ends: some outdated bank statements, a birth certificate of one of my sisters and some old coins.

These were some of the material traces left of my parents' time in this world: ashes and silver. At dinner the night before the ceremony, we toasted their memory and struggled with a rickety, sixties-era slide carousel with slides from Olson family camping trips, birthdays and holidays. Over drinks, we laughed and shared anecdotes from our childhood days on an Ontario airbase town. We tried, with only partial success, to recall the names of family friends in slides. We marvelled at how my mother kept her slim figure even after four children.

Given enough time, personal history takes on the quality of a dream. What became of that kid with the crew cut and buck-toothed grin, for example? The childhood self in Ektachrome seemed no more real to me now than a dream I had the previous night. And my parents are almost as spectral. They were here only a short time ago. My dad, two years ago. My mom, nine months ago, though she had long been absent through dementia. Now, they are utterly gone. It still seems strange and so dreamlike.

Time, dreams and *death.* Those are three of the biggest puzzles for human beings.

What is time? "The cradle rocks above an abyss and common sense tells us that our existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness," wrote Russian novelist Vladimir Nabokov in the opening lines of his memoir, *Speak, Memory.* Nabokov went on to describe a "chronophobiac" young friend who experienced panic when he watched an old home movie in which his mother was waving from an upstairs window. Below, a brand-new baby carriage sat empty. He realized that the carriage was his own, days before his actual birth, "with the smug, encroaching air of a coffin." For Nabokov's chronophobiac, it was a frightening peek into the eternity of darkness preceding existence.

I'm not a chronophobiac; if anything, I'm a 'chronophiliac.' The subject of time has long fascinated me, along with its existential sidekick, death. I've been on the trail of all things temporal since my teens and have thumbed through plenty of books on the topic, yet all I've managed to do is circle a dense thicket of prose, without flushing out the prey. I'm hardly alone in my puzzlement. Seventeen-hundred-years-ago, St. Augustine famously asked, "What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know."

If anything, it's even harder to square our subjective understanding with the contemporary scientific description of time. At the turn of the last century, a Swiss patent office clerk by the name of Albert Einstein denied time and space independent existence, replacing them with a ghostly hybrid called "space-time." In Einstein's "General Theory of Relativity," clocks slow down at velocities near the speed of light and in the presence of gravitational fields. Even something as straightforward as determining whether two events happened simultaneously or not gets all mucked up at relativistic scales and speeds. And it's all been confirmed by experiments.

It's even weirder in the microworld where time is theorized to be 'quantized' like particles of light. At this level of inquiry, answers are conditioned by the way we ask questions. To measure is to change the reality we attempt to measure. Luckily, for embodied beings that prefer to exist in one place at once, the whims of the microworld are swamped at classical scales, giving us our hard-edged world of bus trips, bank holidays and baseball games.

There is inextricable connection between consciousness and time, some scientists believe. Theoretical physicist Julian Barbour hypothesizes the passage of time is purely an artifact of consciousness, like colour. Just as 'red' is a subjective quality the human brain imparts to a particular wavelength of light, the subjective sense of time is something the mind conjures up out of a physical world. How, I'm not sure, since I've only skimmed his book. (So many books about time and so little time.)

What are dreams? There is no shortage of theories, from neural house cleaning to an evolutionary gambit for avoiding nocturnal predators. Or how about the freedom to "go quietly insane" every night? Whatever the story we tell ourselves about dreams, they will, at some point, leave the dreamer scratching his or her head. A few weeks after my father's death, I had one such dream. I was sitting at a desk as hands set before me a drawing of a western-style comic strip. There were cowboys and horses in action scenes, drawn in a manner reminiscent of the long-gone Sunday strip, *Price Valiant*. "Now I want to show you something I'm really proud of," said the voice,

which I recognized as my father. The hands set another comic strip before me on the desk surface – more western stuff, but drawn in an unconventional, stylistic manner of great beauty. This was graphic art, as opposed to commercial art.

My father had always wanted to be an artist, an impossible pursuit with four kids, yet he felt pride that one of them had taken his road untravelled. I already knew that. And certainly it would make sense I would project that knowledge into a dream. Something I didn't know, however, was revealed a few weeks after his death when my sisters and I were rummaging through a decaying leather photo album we had found among my parents' effects. None of us had ever seen it before. I was surprised to see so many black and white photographs of horses in bridles and cowboy gear. My father took them when he was a kid, at his uncle's farm in Regina. This was the place he was happiest as a kid, my sisters told me. The pages and pages of horse photos were strongly reminiscent of the strip I was shown in the dream.

If my dad had a bit more time on his hands – say, all of eternity – perhaps he'd have taken up a hobby he had little time for on Earth. At least, that's the theory my sister endorses.

It's no use conveying this to the *New England Journal of Medicine* or *The Lancet*. It's an anecdotal report of no weight to anyone other than me and a few family members. Yet, for decades, there have been a number of studies, such as those from The Maimonides Medical Center Dream Laboratory in Brooklyn, New York, suggesting the dreaming mind may sometimes extend beyond the normal limits of space and time. But debunkers continue to reject such research as pseudoscience, the result of loose protocols and experimenter bias. I'm not qualified to assess the contending claims, but I've met some so-called 'rationalists' who become completely unhinged by anything with a whiff of the occult. No experimental evidence for the paranormal will ever score through their ever-moving goalposts, just as the only standard of proof for some fuzzy-minded New Agers is whatever makes them feel good.

Skeptical-minded materialists like their world with sharply defined boundaries and tightly stitched labels, but I don't believe this tidy mapmaking does full justice to the messy terrain of human experience. All I know is that my dream with the comic strips felt like a "big dream" rather than the nocturnal newsreels I'm familiar with. It was like an IMAX film compared to a small, highly compressed jpeg.

What is death? Actually, my father was himself a hard-core skeptic for most of his life. He lived in an intellectual Missouri (the "show me" state) and didn't go in for fringe ideas of any kind and that included stories about life after death. Then, about 13-years-ago, after he had fallen sick, he was wide awake in his bedroom when his brother walked in, big as life and real as day. Unmedicated at the time, my father could see the sheets crumpled from where the figure sat at the edge of the bed. His brother, who had died several years earlier, told him "everything is going to be all right" and then vanished. After hearing this story from my sister, I had my dad confirm it for me. He didn't like to talk about it all that much; it did not conform to his mental picture of the world in any way, shape or form.

Of course, my dad's experience was a "vision." Yet we are often too quick to shelve boundary-dissolving experiences that might trouble the dinner table or the faculty room. And when we do try to examine them rationally, one-size-fits-all nouns like "vision," "hallucination," or even "hypnagogic imagery" don't so much *explain* as *explain away.* Visions of deceased loved ones are not uncommon and estimates of so-called ADCs (After Death Communication) range from 50 to 100 million Americans – 20 to 40 percent of the population of the US. Given the cultural pressure on us to keep a lid on anything that might make us sound 'crazy,' this high *continued p.33...*

Skeptical-minded materialists like their world with sharply defined boundaries and tightly stitched labels, but I don't believe this tidy mapmaking does full justice to the messy terrain of human experience.

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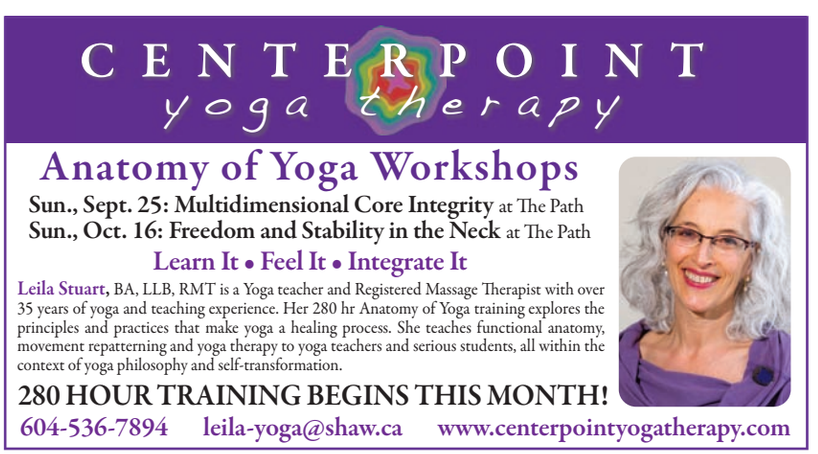
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9/11 and the Orwellian redefinition of *Conspiracy Theory*

While we were not watching, conspiracy theory has undergone Orwellian redefinition.

A "conspiracy theory" no longer means an event explained by a conspiracy. Instead, it now means any explanation, or even a fact, that is out of step with the government's explanation and that of its media pimps.

For example, online news broadcasts of *Russian Television (RT)* have been equated with conspiracy theories by the New York Times simply because *RT* reports news and opinions that the New York Times does not report and the US government does not endorse.

In other words, as truth becomes uncomfortable for government and its Ministry of Propaganda, truth is redefined as conspiracy theory, by which is meant an absurd and laughable explanation that we should ignore.

When piles of carefully researched books, released government documents and testimony of eye witnesses made it clear that Oswald was not President John F. Kennedy's assassin, the voluminous research, government documents and verified testimony was dismissed as "conspiracy theory."

In other words, the truth of the event was unacceptable to the authorities and to the Ministry of Propaganda that represents the interests of authorities.

The purest example of how Americans are shielded from truth is the media's (including many Internet sites') response to the large number of professionals who find the official explanation of September 11, 2001, inconsistent with everything they, as experts, know about physics, chemistry, structural engineering, architecture, fires, structural damage, the piloting of airplanes, the security procedures of the United States, NORAD's capabilities, air traffic control, airport security and other matters. These experts, numbering in the thousands, have been shouted down by know-nothings in the media who brand the experts as "conspiracy theorists."

This despite the fact that the official explanation endorsed by the official media is the most extravagant conspiracy theory in human history.

Let's take a minute to re-acquaint ourselves with the official explanation, which is not regarded as a conspiracy theory despite the fact that it comprises an amazing conspiracy. The official truth is that a handful of young Muslim Arabs who could not fly airplanes, mainly Saudi Arabians who came neither from Iraq nor from Afghanistan, outwitted not only the CIA and the FBI, but also all 16 US intelligence agencies and all intelligence agencies of US allies including Israel's Mossad, which is believed to have penetrated every terrorist organization and which carries out assassinations of those whom Mossad marks as terrorists.

In addition to outwitting every intelligence agency of the United States and its allies, the handful of young Saudi Arabians outwitted the National Security Council, the State Department, NORAD, airport security four times in the same hour on the same morning, air traffic control, caused the US Air Force to be unable to launch interceptor aircraft, and caused three well-built steel-structured buildings, including one not hit by an airplane, to fail suddenly in a few seconds as a result of limited structural damage and small, short-lived, low-temperature fires that burned on a few floors.

The Saudi terrorists were even able to confound the laws of physics and cause WTC building seven to collapse at free fall speed for several seconds, a physical impossibility in the absence of explosives used in controlled demolition.

The story that the government and the media have told us amounts to a gigantic conspiracy, really a script for a James Bond film. Yet anyone who doubts

this improbable conspiracy theory is defined into irrelevance by the obedient media.

Anyone who believes an architect, structural engineer, or demolition expert who says that the videos show that the buildings are blowing up, not falling down, anyone who believes a Ph.D physicist who says that the official explanation is inconsistent with known laws of physics, anyone who believes expert pilots who testify that non-pilots or poorly-qualified pilots cannot fly airplanes in such manoeuvres, anyone who believes the 100 or more first responders who testify that they not only heard explosions in the towers but personally experienced explosions, anyone who believes University of Copenhagen nano-chemist Niels Harrit who reports finding unreacted nano-thermite in dust samples from the WTC towers, anyone who is convinced by experts instead of by propaganda is dismissed as a kook.

A country whose population has been trained to accept the government's word and to shun those who question it is a country without liberty in its future.

In America today, and increasingly throughout the Western world, actual facts and true explanations have been relegated to the realm of kookiness. Only people who believe lies are socially approved and accepted as patriotic citizens.

Indeed, a writer or newscaster is not even permitted to report the findings of 9/11 skeptics. In other words, simply to report Professor Harrit's findings now means that you endorse them or agree with them. Everyone in the US print and TV media knows that he/she will be instantly fired if they report Harrit's findings, even with a laugh. Thus, although Harrit has reported his findings on European television and has lectured widely on his findings in Canadian universities, the fact that he and the international scientific research team that he led found unreacted nano-thermite in the WTC dust and have offered samples to other scientists to examine has to my knowledge never been reported in the American media.

Even Internet sites on which I am among the readers' favorites will not allow me to report on Harrit's findings.

As I reported earlier, I myself had experience with a Huffington Post reporter who was keen to interview a Reagan presidential appointee who was in disagreement with the Republican wars in the Middle East. After he published the interview that I provided at his request, he was terrified to learn that I had reported findings of 9/11 investigators. To protect his career, he quickly inserted on the online interview that my views on the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions could be dismissed as I had reported unacceptable findings about 9/11.

The unwillingness or inability to entertain any view of 9/11 different from the official view dooms to impotence many Internet sites that are opposed to the wars and to the rise of the domestic US police state. These sites, for whatever the reasons, accept the government's explanation of 9/11 yet they try to oppose the "war on terror" and the police state, which are the consequences of accepting the government's explanation. Trying to oppose the consequences of an event whose explanation you accept is an impossible task.

If you believe that America was attacked by Muslim terrorists and is susceptible to future attacks, then a "war on terror" and a domestic police state to root out terrorists become necessary to make Americans safe. The idea that a domestic police state and open-ended war might be more dangerous threats to Americans than terrorists is an impermissible thought.

A country whose population has been trained to accept the government's word and to shun those who question it is a country without liberty in its future.

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Bike lanes great for cities

Most arguments against bike lanes are absurd. Consider this: we have wide roads everywhere to accommodate cars, most of which carry only one person. On either side of many of those roads, we have pedestrian sidewalks. In most large urban areas, we also have bus lanes and transit systems. When cyclists ride on roads, drivers often get annoyed. If they ride on sidewalks, pedestrians rightly get angry.

Human-powered transportation will only get more popular as gas prices rise and as the negative consequences of our car-centric culture increase. We should be doing everything we can to discourage single-occupant automobile use.

In many North American cities, including Vancouver where I live, commuters scream bloody murder if it takes them an extra two minutes to get to their destination by car. The reality is drivers are slowed more by increases in car traffic than by bike lanes. According to the *Globe and Mail*, a study by Stantec Consulting Ltd. found that traffic delays because of bike lanes in Vancouver were mostly imagined.

There's also the argument that slowing car traffic is a good thing. In some European cities, planners are finding that making life more difficult for drivers while providing incentives for people to take transit, walk, or cycle creates numerous benefits, from reducing pollution and smog-related health problems to cutting greenhouse gas emissions and making cities safer and friendlier.

People are finally realizing that transporting a 90-kilogram person in two tonnes of metal just isn't sustainable.

In Zurich, Switzerland, planners have added traffic lights, including some that transit operators can change in their favour, increased the time of red lights and decreased the greens, removed pedestrian underpasses, slowed speed limits, reduced parking and banned cars from many streets. "Our goal is to reconquer public space for pedestrians, not to make it easy for drivers," chief traffic planner Andy Fellmann told the *New York Times*.

Where streets were closed to cars in Zurich, store owners worried about losing business, but the opposite happened – pedestrian traffic increased 30 to 40 percent, bringing more people into stores and businesses. In Vancouver, the Stantec study found that businesses along new downtown bike routes initially experienced minor decreases in sales, but numerous strategies were available to overcome the declines. In the long run, most cities that have improved cycling and pedestrian infrastructure have seen benefits for area businesses.

Building bike lanes also creates jobs and other economic spin-offs, according to a study from the Political Economy Research Institute in Amherst, Massachusetts, titled "Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure: A National Study of Employment Impacts." Researchers found "bicycling infrastructure creates the most jobs for a given level of spending."

It's important to note that European cities have matched disincentives to drive with improved public transit. After all, not everyone can get to their destination by walking or cycling. But with fewer cars and reduced gridlock, those who must use automobiles… have an easier time getting around.

Fortunately, the backlash against cycling infrastructure improvements appears to be subsiding. As oil becomes scarce and pollution and climate change increase, people are finally realizing that transporting a 90-kilogram person in two tonnes of metal just isn't sustainable, especially in urban areas.

Written with contributions from **David Suzuki Foundation** editorial and communications specialist **Ian Hanington**. Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

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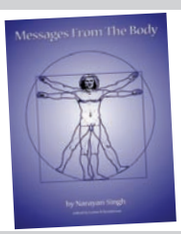

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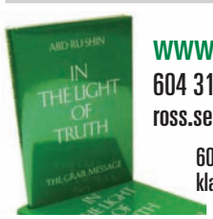

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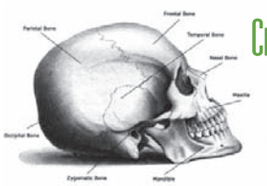

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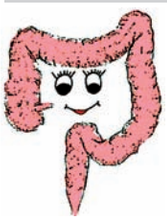

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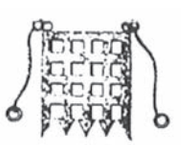

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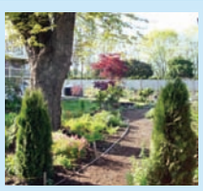
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...***Olson*** *from pg. 23*

figure is not altogether surprising.

A grieving father who had lost his young son once wrote Albert Einstein for some comforting words. A passage from Einstein's letter was recorded in the *New York Times* in 1950. "A human being is part of a whole, called by us the Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness."

My bias is this: I would like to believe, in ways I cannot fathom, that love is not so much a hostage of time as a species of eternity and in rare moments of dreams or vision, the levees of individual separation are breached. That being said, I will sum up these musings with three little words that men find so difficult to say: *I don't know*.

On a cloudless Sunday, I walked with two of my sisters and my niece along a forest path as the morning sun cut shafts of light through an arbour of branches. Stepping around banana slugs and tree roots, we arrived at a secluded spot by a brook that we had selected the previous day. We took turns scattering our parents' ashes and I read a poem I had written. We held hands in a circle and honoured the two people who had brought four utterly unlike, occasionally fractious, siblings into the material world.

To keep the moment from fading into shadowy recollection, we agreed to return to the spot every year. Our parents passed away in such a terrible, tragic manner, the least we thought we could do as their children is to honour their final, brave battle against impossible odds.

It's become a cliché that the Pollyannas compare the world to a dream and the Cassandras compare it to a nightmare. Yet the world-as-dream theme has persisted for centuries across the globe, from the Australian aboriginal 'dreamtime' to Taoist philosophy to ancient Vedic myth to physicist John Archibald Wheeler's "participatory universe." It's also a time-honoured theme in literature, art and music, from Shakespeare to Philip K. Dick to the songs of Neil Young to children's nursery rhymes ("row, row your boat gently down the stream… life is but a dream"). Its millennia-long shelf life demands our attention and our acknowledgement that we may be dealing with something more than a shop-worn metaphor.

Scientists, philosophers and artists will continue to debate and celebrate these questions as long as there is a human species. As Prospero said in *The Tempest*, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on/ and our little life/ is rounded with a sleep."

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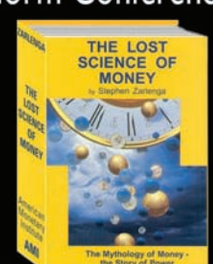

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Independent Media Steve Anderson

Taking back the Internet

Canada has an internet "openness and access deficit." That was the starting point for OpenMedia.ca's "Casting an Open Net" report published earlier this year. The report noted three disturbing practices employed by several of Canada's dominant Internet Service Providers (ISPs):

1. Many Canadian ISPs (Bell, Rogers, Shaw) selectively limit access to certain online services in a practice known as "throttling" or slowing down of Internet traffic. This renders certain services almost unusable, as expressed in the recent complaint to the CRTC against Rogers for throttling "World of Warcraft," a popular online game.

2. Cable television and mobile providers are offering limited and controlled versions of the Internet over television and mobile devices, either by providing special priority access to certain services such as Facebook (in the case of mobile providers) or by providing web services via cable television. These take resources (in the form of either users or bandwidth) away from the open, public Internet that has been the engine of innovation.

3. Big ISPs have been imposing usage-based billing (UBB) that features low usage caps and high per-use prices inconsistent with global standards. This discriminates against bandwidth-heavy activities such as online video consumption and distribution, online gaming and web development. When ISPs apply these costs, while exempting their own media services (video-on-demand or IPTV) from the caps, they stack the cards in their favour in a way that compromises the open and democratic nature of the Internet.

Taken together, these activities clearly stifle innovation, free expression and new opportunities for participatory democracy. However, with this year's exponential growth of pro-Internet community, most visible via the StopTheMeter.ca campaign, the big ISPs appear to be losing their grip on Canada's Internet. This year, every major political party has come out against the punitive internet metering schemes (usage based billing) that ISPs are trying to impose on Canadians. What's more, commissioners at the CRTC, the regulator of the telecommunications industry, are showing signs that action is required to stop big telecom price gouging and to also ensure Canadians have affordable access to the Internet.

Alas, the big phone and cable companies are not giving up without a fight. In fact, they're gobbling down in greed. These companies are raising prices across the board while they still can and trying to cozy up to policymakers: Bell has just appointed former Industry Minister Jim Prentice as a board member and Telus has done the same with former Conservative MP Stockwell Day.

Big Telecom's appointment of these key cabinet ministers reeks of patronage and backroom dealings. The tide has turned against Big Telecom and it now appears to be willing to cheat to hold on to its control of the telecom market and your wallet.

For the time being, big telecom continues to outspend Canadians by investing a portion of its gouge-secured profits in maintaining its dominance. In essence, big ISPs are gouging internet users and using our hard-earned money to pay for an army of lawyers, lobbyists and expensive board appointments.

To undo this system of telecom market control, we'll need to expand upon what allowed the pro-internet community to successfully push back against big telecom earlier this year. Our success resulted from a broad collaboration of a network of people and organizations that drew a line in the sand when big telecom decided it was appropriate to add new usage fees to our bills. As Parliament gets underway, it's time to scale up our efforts. Get involved at www.openmedia.ca/engage.

Steve Anderson is the national coordinator for OpenMedia.ca He has written for The Tyee, Toronto Star, Epoch Times and Adbusters.
steve@openmedia.ca, www.FacebookSteve.com, www.SteveOnTwitter.com

A Yes to cancel the HST is a Yes for democracy

This has truly been a David versus Goliath battle and today the giant HST has been slain.

British Columbians' rejection of the Harmonized Sales Tax in today's [August 26] binding referendum is historic and a victory for the people and for democracy in BC, says Bill Vander Zalm, the former BC premier who led Fight HST, the grassroots group that fought the tax.

"British Columbians have not only rejected an unfair tax but they have also sent a message to not just the BC Liberal government, but to all governments in Canada – do not break your word to voters after you get elected. The BC Liberals thought they could get away with imposing the HST after promising not to before the May 2009 election – we proved them wrong twice. We organized the first successful Citizens Initiative petition in Canadian history to force a referendum, gathering 705,643 voter signatures in less than 90 days from every one of BC's 85 ridings.

"This has truly been a David versus Goliath battle and today the giant HST has been slain," Vander Zalm said. "It is an enormous victory for the citizens of BC and for democracy."

Vander Zalm said it is now urgent that the BC Liberal government quickly bring an end to the HST that shifted a $2 billion tax burden onto consumers and off of big business by adding an extra seven percent tax on services and hundreds of items not previously subject to the Provincial Sales Tax.

Vander Zalm said he expects the BC government to refuse to take responsibility for its own actions when it imposed the HST after the May 2009 election and instead paint a picture of economic doom and gloom. "The reality is the BC Liberals looked for a quick fix to their massively out of control deficit in 2009 and refused to honestly tell voters about our financial problems. Premier Christy Clark should learn from former Premier Gordon Campbell's mistakes and consult with voters about BC's finances and seek a consensus, not make rash decisions in anger at the rejection of the HST."

"The BC government needs to skilfully negotiate an end to the HST that takes place quickly and reduces costs to the province for this ill-fated mistake," he said. "The $1.6 billion 'grant' from Ottawa to impose the HST should be pro-rated for the period of time this tax was in place.

Fight HST lead organizer Chris Delaney said the Referendum result would have been an even greater vote for the YES side had Premier Clark kept her promise to fund both sides equally and had spending limits been kept in place as it was for the Initiative process. As it was, our $250,000 less the $25,000 we had to pay in HST out of that was no match for the estimated $25,000,000 spent by government and big business.

Delaney says a precedent has been set with the HST Referendum: "No government, no matter what their political stripe, can ever again create a new tax, expand the tax base or indeed implement a significant new policy without first obtaining the people's permission through either an election or a referendum. The people have spoken.

"People can debate whether the HST is a good tax or a bad tax, but there was no debate about whether we should have a Referendum or a more robust democracy. That is perhaps the greatest achievement of this whole exercise," said Delaney.

Vander Zalm said the victory belongs to the people of BC, but most especially to the tens of thousands of volunteers who gave their time, talent and treasure on the Initiative petition that led to the history-making referendum result.

Source: www.fighthst.ca

Letters From the Big Man grows on you.

VIFF 2011 preview

After a decade of covering documentary at the Vancouver International Film Festival (September 29 to October 14 this year), I've come to rely on certain staples. Each year, filmmakers tackle the issue of oil dependency with a sharp focus on the ecological and humanitarian travesty of the tar sands; wrestle with the vexed question of clean, green energy for all; fret about the downward spiral of biodiversity; and seek spiritual solace from the chaotic materialism of mainstream western lifestyles. All of these issues are covered, in one shape or another, in the five films I've seen so far.

Since VIFF 2010, we've had the Gulf oil spill, the North Sea oil spill, and as I write, activists are being arrested outside the White House over the plan to build the Keystone XL Pipeline from the Alberta tar sands to Texas. Local adventurer Frank Wolf's *On the Line* highlights another pipeline project closer to home. Wolf and buddy Todd McGowan biked, walked and paddled the length of Enbridge Corp's proposed pipeline from Bruderheim Alberta to the port city of Kitimat, BC.

In a rough-and-ready video diary of their adventure, Wolf talks to everyday people about the project – including advocates and naysayers – as the duo traverse roads, fields, forest and hundreds of water courses. Unfortunately, the review disc got stuck a third into the film, but I saw enough to want to catch the rest of it.

Volker Sattel's austere *Under Control* shows impressive timing, coming so soon after the recent Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster and Germany's subsequent decision to abandon nuclear energy by 2022. Sattel also gained incredible access to Germany's network of nuclear reactors, waste dumps deep in the earth and a training centre (where he memorably shoots an emergency leak). Occasionally, it's difficult to follow the scientific jargon via subtitles, but Sattel's bleak, Teutonic vision of these monster projects is simultaneously awe-inspiring and chilling.

Fish, and the lack thereof, is on the menu in Sushi - *The Global Catch*. With fish stocks in danger of collapsing, what's next? The film's passion seems torn between on the one hand, celebrating the art and tradition of sushi and on the other, the preservation of fish species – in particular, increasingly rare bluefin tuna. These big fish, "the Porsche of the seas," sell for up to $400,000 each. There are some valuable and unsettling insights into the lucrative, global bluefin industry, however, one of the key conclusions, that bluefin tuna can be farmed and sold as an "organic" choice, seemed a case of industry self-serving.

Crazy Wisdom: The Life & Times of Chogyam Trungpa looks at this controversial monk, who, in the 60s and 70s, was as well known for his drinking and womanizing as for his teachings. Johanna Demetrakas' uncritical profile features Pema Chodron, Ram Dass, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Thurman, and plenty of archive material. While there's no doubting the spiritual teacher's charisma, the film would have benefited from a deeper exploration of Trungpa's behaviour.

With its hanging ending, *Letters From the Big Man* feels like a pilot for a television series. It also features a Sasquatch man. Not just one, either. Initially, I couldn't help laughing whenever the elusive, woolly creature made an appearance, but the film grew on me. Much of the action takes place in an Oregon forest where artist, hydrologist and general loner Sarah (Lily Rabe) is surveying a stream after a forest fire and nursing a broken heart. The drama is slow moving, it rains a lot and there's little dialogue, but Sasquatch's telepathic powers began to get to me.

Robert Alstead made the Vancouver documentary **You Never Bike Alone**
www.youneverbikealone.com
He writes at www.2020Vancouver.com

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Blood in the Mobile
(Denmark/Germany, 82 min.)
In this fearless piece of investigative journalism, Frank Poulsen seeks to uncover the truth about the "blood minerals" that power our cell phones. Who are the real villains here: the ruthless henchman running the African mines or the cold-blooded suits turning a blind eye in Nokia's corporate headquarters? Winner, Cinema for Peace Award for Justice, Berlin 2011. **<BLOOD>**

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On the Line (Canada, 70 min.)
Director Frank Wolf's low-tech journey from the Alberta Tar Sands to the B.C. coast traces the planned route for the Northern Gateway Pipeline Project, highlighting the soon to be affected locals and the as yet unspoiled wilderness over which this environmentally heedless project looms. **<ONTHE>**

You've Been Trumped (UK, 95 min.)
In this all-too-real David vs. Goliath drama, a few Scottish farmers find themselves in the way of nauseatingly arrogant Donald's Trump's plans for developing the "world's top golf resort" on ecologically fragile coastal sand dunes near Aberdeen. Documentarian Anthony Baxter offers us a stirring example of principled resistance, but asks if, in fact, Goliaths lose. Winner, Green Award (best environmental film), Sheffield 2011. **<YOUBE>**

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SEPT 10
Psychic Fair & BBQ: 10-6PM. Free admission, $20/15min. reading. Sullivan Community Hall, 6306-152nd Street, Surrey. Booths, Kid's corner, Healing 604-539-0770, www.lighthousespiritualcentre.ca

SEPT 11
"Humankind"– Free evening of song, prayers from around the world and meditation to bring hope to East Africa on 9/11 at 4PM. Christ Church Cathedral (690 Burrard).

SEPT 11
J. Krishnamurti: Exploring the Essence of Love – The Content of One's Consciousness. DVD showing, dialogue, refreshments. Free. New time & location: Board Breakout Room, 7th floor, Vancouver Public Library, 2PM. aleyona@hotmail.ca, 604-354-1534.

SEPT 16-18
Indian Head Massage Weekend Course with Susan Allen 7-9pm Friday; 9-5PM Saturday & Sunday. $350. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818. www.pacificreflexology.com

SEPT 17
Greenpeace Rainbow Warrior Festival: Jericho Park 11AM-6PM. Greenpeace celebrates its 40th anniversary! Founded in Vancouver in 1971, it has grown to be the world's largest, independent environmental organization. The day-long festival includes music, workshops, kids activities and more. www.greenpeace.ca/40

SEPT 18
Vanguard Science: Psychedelics in the 21st Century. Lectures & benefit auction. 6PM, Arts Club Theatre, 1585 Johnson St., Vancouver. Tickets: www.vanguardscience.charityhappenings.org Sept 13: Out of Mind in Victoria. www.maps.org/outofmind

SEPT 23
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SEPT 24-25
Two-day Introduction to Chi-Reflexology with Moss Arnold from Australia. 9AM-6PM Sat. & Sun. $395. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818, www.pacificreflexology.com

SEPT 28
Free talk "Increase Your Dreaming Power" & info evening for the Shamanic Training Program that begins Oct. 14-16 in Vancouver. 7:15PM, Vancouver. RSVP early; space is limited: Email: info@shamanicmedicine.ca www.shamanicmedicine.ca 1-877-329-8668.

SEPT 28-OCT 14
Vancouver International Film Festival www.viff.org

SEPT 29
Transmission Meditation: Help speed the transformations leading to a better world for all. Everyone welcome. FREE. 7-9PM, Roundhouse Community Centre (Pacific @ Davie). 604.983.0926.

SEPT 29-OCT 2
American Monetary Institute Reform Conference, University Center, downtown Chicago. Dedicated to the independent study of monetary history, theory and reform. Info/registration at www.monetary.org or by phone 1-224-805-2200.

SEPT 30-OCT 2
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OCT 1 & 2
Introductory Course on the Flower Remedies of Dr. Edward Bach: Level One of the Bach International Education Program Vancouver, and upcoming seminars. FMI 250-331-3228, www.BachFlowersCanada.com

OCT 15
Addiction Unplugged: Moving from Addictions to Preferences, and from Preferences to New Acceptances about Yourself and Life. Centre for Peace, 16th & Burrard, 1-6PM, $100, www.livingyourtruth.ca

OCT 23
Discover Your Goddess Archetype: A Shamanic Workshop for Women. Shamanic journeying, gentle yoga, dance, & more! With Shamanic Practitioners Christina Niven (www.soulspringwellness.ca) & Sonya Weir (www.eaglefireshamaniccoaching.com) 10-5:30PM, $100, at the Pacific Institute of Reflexology, Vancouver. Email sonyaweir@uniserve.com to register or call 778-227-2939.

OCT 27-30
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NOV 3-4

Bridging The Couple Gap: Inspirational two-day course featuring John Gottman & Julie Schwartz-Gottman. The Stanley Theatre, Vancouver. Sponsored by School of Community & Social Justice of JIBC. Info: www.jibc.ca/cccs Registration: register@jibc.ca or call 604-528-5590.

NOV 19-20

Healing Touch 1, Vancouver: Experiential hands-on healing, wellness, prevention. EarlyBird Price Oct 1-$345, Regular $370. Email Betty to register: therapeuticbalancing@gmail.com www.healingtouchprogram.com

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SOS (Science of Spirituality): See Resource Directory listing in Spiritual Practices for schedule in Richmond, Vancouver & Victoria. 604-277-1247. All Welcome. www.sos.org

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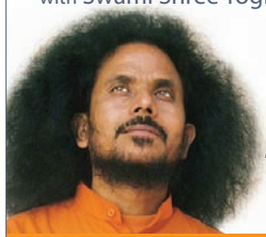
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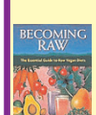
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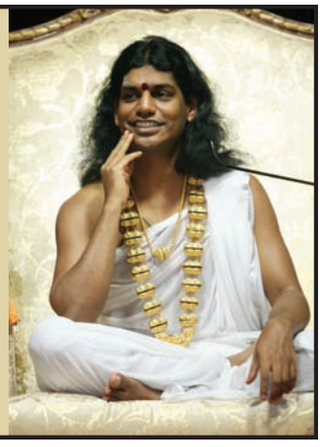

Kathleen Seidel

Coffee ~ the nectar of Sufism

Most coffee drinkers today are probably unaware of coffee's heritage in the Sufi orders of southern Arabia. Members of the Shadhiliyya order are said to have spread coffee drinking throughout the Islamic world sometime between the 13th and 15th centuries CE. A Shadhiliyya *shaykh* was introduced to coffee drinking in Ethiopia where the native highland bush, its fruit and the beverage made from it were known as *bun*. Many believed this Sufi was Abu'l Hasan 'Ali ibn Umar who resided for a time at the court of Sadaddin II, a sultan of southern Ethiopia. 'Ali ibn Umar subsequently returned to Yemen with the knowledge the berries were not only edible, but they also promoted wakefulness. To this day, the *shaykh* is regarded as the patron saint of coffee growers, coffeehouse proprietors and coffee drinkers; in Algeria, coffee is sometimes called shadhiliyye in his honour.

The beverage became known as *qahwa* – a term formerly applied to wine – and ultimately to Europeans as "The Wine of Islam." It became popular among the Sufis to boil up the grounds and drink the brew to help them stay awake during their night *dhikr*. (Roasting the beans was a later improvement developed by the Persians.) Coffee drinkers even coined their own term for the euphoria it produced: *marqaha*.

The mystic theologian Shaikh ibn Isma'il Ba Alawi of Al-Shihr stated that when imbibed with prayerful intent and devotion, coffee could lead to the experience of *qahwa ma'nawiyya* ("the ideal *qahwa*") and *qahwat al-Sufiyya*, interchangeable terms defined as "the enjoyment which the people of God feel in beholding the hidden mysteries and attaining the wonderful disclosures and the great revelations."

It soon became apparent coffee's benefits could be extended to the workday and the local economy as well. The southern Arabian climate was ideal for coffee cultivation and the ports of Yemen, particularly the port of Mocha, became the world's primary exporters of coffee. Coffee's use spread to Mecca where, according to an early Arab historian, it was drunk in the sacred mosque itself so that there was scarcely a *dhikr* or *mawlid* where coffee was not present. Coffee spread throughout the Islamic world by way of pilgrims, traders, students and travellers. Al-Azhar became an early centre of coffee drinking and a certain amount of ceremony began to surround it.

Over time, coffee even acquired an angelic reputation. According to one Persian legend, it was first served to a sleepy Muhammad by the Angel Gabriel. In another story, King Solomon was said to have entered a town whose inhabitants were suffering a mysterious disease; on Gabriel's command, he prepared a brew of roasted coffee beans and thereby cured the townspeople.

By the early 16th century CE, coffee drinking moved to the secular sphere and a new institution evolved that transformed social life throughout the Islamic world. And coffeehouses supplied more than beans; they had the expertise to prepare the brew, the necessary equipment and a convivial milieu in which to enjoy it. Ahmet Pasha, the governor of Egypt during the late 16th century CE, actually built coffeehouses as a public works project, garnering him great political popularity. In the mid-17th century, two Syrian businessmen, Hakm and Shams, introduced coffee to Istanbul, established the city's first coffeehouses, made

photo ©Typhoonski

a fortune in the process and established a new and profitable arena of economic activity. Evliya Efendi wrote of the coffee-merchants of Constantinople: "The Merchants of coffee are three hundred men and shops. They are great and rich merchants, protected by Shaikh Shadhili… "

Throughout the first few centuries of its history in the Islamic world, coffee's popularity engendered great controversy. Many were suspicious of the effects of caffeine and the gatherings in which it was consumed – they seemed debauched to some and subversive to others. Coffeehouses competed with mosques for attendance and as unsupervised gathering places for wits and learned men, provided spawning grounds for sedition. The wags of Istanbul jokingly called the coffeehouses *mekteb-i 'irfan*, "schools of knowledge." Efforts were launched and persisted for at least a hundred years to declare coffee an intoxicant forbidden by Islamic law.

During Ramadan in 1539 CE, Cairo's coffeehouses were raided and closed, although only for a few days. Soon after coffeehouses achieved popularity in Constantinople, Sultan Murat IV closed them all and they were to remain dark until the last part of the century. But as soon as the Sultan's edict went into effect, the coffeehouse patrons, their money and their social life went elsewhere: "In Brussa there are 75 coffeehouses frequented by the most elegant and learned of the inhabitants. All coffeehouses, particularly those near the great mosque, abound with men skilled in a thousand arts…" writes Efendi.

Opposed by well-educated coffee-drinkers from the highest ranks of the religious and political hierarchy, who did not look fondly upon innovative, legal prohibitions, the moralists fought a losing battle. The "tavern without wine" offered a respectable gathering place for men to socialize and entertain away from home and business was especially brisk during Ramadan when proprietors made extra efforts to draw crowds with storytellers and puppet shows.

Despite coffee's eventual secularization, the fondness for it in Sufi circles and the motives for its use were not lost. Helveti dervishes were among those who enthusiastically drank coffee to promote the stamina needed for extended *dhikr* ceremonies and retreats. Once coffee was readily available throughout the Ottoman Empire, it became a fixture of daily life in the Helveti *dergahs*.

In Persia, coffeehouses evolved into hotbeds of lasciviousness and political dispute soon after they were introduced. Shah Abbas I responded to this situation by installing a *mullah* in the leading Isfahan establishment; he would arrive early in the morning, hold forth on topics of religion, history, law and poetry and then encourage those assembled there to be off to their work. A pious ambience was thereby promoted, an example was set for other coffeehouses and a potentially volatile social milieu was somewhat controlled. Poets and mystics occasionally took up permanent residence; for example, Molla Ghorur of Shiraz settled in Isfahan in his old age and established himself at a coffeehouse, which soon became a gathering place for those seeking spiritual guidance.

By the end of the century, coffee was fashionable throughout Europe and its cultivation and use subsequently spread to North and South America. Wherever it has been introduced, it has become a symbol of hospitality and a vehicle of sociability. The current resurgence in popularity of the coffeehouse is undoubtedly a response to the marketing efforts of coffee producers and enterprising restaurateurs. It may also contain a longing for the sort of companionship the Shadhiliyya dervishes enjoyed 600-years-ago, as they gathered to remember Allah and passed the cup from hand to hand.

> Coffee's use spread to Mecca where, according to an early Arab historian, it was drunk in the sacred mosque itself... Over time, coffee even acquired an angelic reputation.

Adapted from **Serving the Guest: A Sufi Cookbook** by Kathleen Seidel © 1999, 2000. Visit the Rumi Rose Garden Cafe & Market, 3660 E. Hastings St., Vancouver, 604-558-4455. www.rumirose.com

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